

ELITE AMBIGUITY:
FRAMING THE WORLD TRADE CENTER AND OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBINGS

by Paul Fucito

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Thesis directed by

Robert M. Entman
J.B. and M.C. Shapiro Professor of Media and Public Affairs

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the early 1980s, Americans have historically externalized threats of terrorism. While some critics place blame on western media coverage of the Middle East as being dominated with stories of terrorist attacks and images of hostages (*The Guardian*, 2005) many researchers have found that attacks plotted by outsiders are simpler to frame by collectively placing the blame outside of our own culture.

Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center has traced domestic hate groups since 1971 and states “there’s a tendency to want to externalize the threat and say the people who want to hurt us don’t look like us, they don’t worship the same god and don’t have the same skin color” (cited in Copeland, 2004). Before the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, “the initial solution, to blame foreigners in general and Muslim fundamentalists in particular, made sense in view of Americans’ general ignorance on international affairs, our collective conscience about terrorism, and long standing xenophobic strains in American culture” (Deflem, 1995, p. 1).

Such assumptions have perpetuated an underlying mentality of “us” versus “them,” in which terrorists are typically stereotyped as foreigners, thanks in part to conservative national security instincts rooted in America’s eighteenth-century view of itself (Scoblic, 2008). Despite a measurable array of threatening domestic groups still in existence following the events of September 11th (9/11) including white supremacists, eco-terrorists, and anti-government militias, U.S. Marshals’ Service chief inspector Geoff Shank states that little attention is being paid to them “because everybody is concerned about the guy in a turban” (cited in Copeland, 2004).

Politicians, especially President George W. Bush, have taken advantage of ambiguous crisis events by amplifying fear appeals and exercising their ability to define issues in ways “which encourage the adoption or continued implementation of foreign and domestic policies... under the general heading of ‘counterterrorism’” (Livingston, 1994, p. 7).

But what happens when the people who want to hurt us do worship the same god and do have the same skin color? Are they portrayed the same way as those typically stereotyped as terrorists? Are their actions defined as acts of terrorism despite an historic tendency to externalize such threats? If they are not covered as terrorists, what alternate labels are assigned? More importantly, who is providing the narrative?

I posit that the real disconnect between 1993, 1995, and 2001 can be traced to a combination of the media’s inconsistent use of the terrorism label, as Livingston (1994) found in his print analysis of the *New York Times*, and the ambiguity of crisis events created by the absence of affirmative elite framing (Entman, 2003).

This paper will attempt to illustrate the power of media framing when government elites lack the political motivation to define crisis events, through a case study of two pre-9/11 terror attacks committed on U.S. soil: the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York and the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma.

Externalized Threat

The attacks on 9/11 have become a defining moment in American history, forever changing the landscape of the world in which we naively thought we lived. Four commercial airliners were hijacked by well-coordinated terrorists and transformed into

deadly weapons killing thousands of innocent civilians in cold blood. Osama bin laden and the Al-Qaeda network had emerged from their fringe extremist status to become a major, and highly publicized, national security threat. While these attacks were considered a shocking wake-up call for the American public, the country actually had been facing terrorism and its side effects for several decades.

Prior to 9/11, terrorism primarily had been viewed by the American public as a foreign concern, but not as a major threat within their own borders. Iyengar suggested that most American citizens would find local crime a greater personal threat because terrorism was typically “associated with poorly understood disputes in distant locales” (Iyengar, 1991, p. 26).

While earlier attacks on American interests in Lebanon, Yemen, and other territories did garner attention, they still occurred overseas and were on a much smaller scale when compared to the devastating localized attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Therefore, outside of a major attack Americans had little concern over such risks (May, 1991). The public may have become apprehensive about traveling to certain parts of the Middle East, but domestic security was still not a significant concern.

Unlike those living in Europe, Israel, and the Middle East, the American public had not yet faced the scourge of terrorism on such a local and more personal level prior to 9/11 in the same way that they had experienced domestic problems on a day-to-day basis. General understandings of foreign affairs and issues remained exactly that- foreign. Manheim argues that the cause stems from the public’s lack of direct experience regarding foreign policy issues in comparison to domestic issues (Manheim, 1994).

Many agencies within the U.S. government also seemed to view terrorism with less urgency. In fact, according to The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, “until recently, homeland security and preventing terrorism were considered lesser priorities of many existing federal agencies” (Floden & Kaufer, 2002, p. 5). While terrorism policies did exist, they were primarily designed to address international threats (Kuzma, 2000) especially during the 1980s when “decision makers at the highest level of government were preoccupied with anti-American terrorism abroad” (Nacos, 1994, p. 2).

Carter placed some of the blame on America’s post Cold War complacency and argued that “the U.S. government did not have a managerial approach (i.e., a framework for bringing responsibility, accountability, and resources together in sharp focus) to deliver a key public good – security in the homeland against catastrophic terrorism” (Carter, 2002, p. 22). The end of the Cold War also lead to a reduction in defense capital resulting in funding cuts in the U.S. budget for national security expenditures (Baracskay, 2007).

While the sudden and visual impact of terrorist events triggers a uniform sense of immediate urgency, the long-term effects on public opinion and policy are often inconsistent and incremental. Therefore, it is easy to see how the issue of terrorism meandered in and out of the agenda along a serpentine pathway prior to 9/11, briefly returning to prominence during select crises, yet failing to achieve longevity.

September 11th certainly brought the effects of terrorism home, but there were multiple events that preceded it, including the Iran hostage crisis in 1979, the downing of Pan American flight 103 in 1988, and the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993. Several of these events were considered among the worst acts of terrorism in their time,

especially the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, a reference point that nearly all subsequent tragedies were compared against.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The Agenda

The agenda-setting process is a long, complex, and more often than not, slowly traveled road populated by competing issues all clamoring for recognition and reconciliation. In simplest terms, the agenda represents the salient issues, problems, and concerns prioritized for a specific population to address at any given time. The White House, politicians, special interest groups, the media, and even the public each have their own sets of issues to champion for attention, all churning into a large “policy primordial soup” (Kingdon 1995) of popular and less popular alternatives and ideas. Decades worth of research surrounds an ongoing scholarly debate as to who ultimately controls the agenda.

Traditional studies have long traced the relationship between media content and quantitative patterns of coverage, and corresponding surveys of the public agenda. Much of the evidence points to a correlation between media concentration on an issue and its relative importance to the public. Walter Lippmann (1922) suggested long ago that public priorities and attitudes tend to reflect the media’s prioritization of issues and the attendant tenor of the coverage. More recent studies, including those conducted by Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner (2005), suggest that there is a measure of interdependency between the media agenda, the public agenda, and the public policy agenda.

The term “agenda-setting,” itself, was first coined by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in a 1972 study of undecided presidential election voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina pointing to a near perfect correlation between patterns of news coverage

in network and print media, and issues of public concern. Hundreds of published studies utilizing quantitative measurements have subsequently documented this influence of the news media under a wide range of research designs, including panel studies, time-series analysis, and controlled laboratory experiments (McCombs, 1993).

Yet other researchers have found contrary results ranging from limited or absent media effects on the political agenda to decidedly strong effects, with no dominant outcome. “If media scholars are, by and large, much taken with the agenda-setting power of the press, many scholars of traditional political institutions seem less impressed” (Bartels 1996, p. 3).

Focusing Events

The status quo of the issue agenda quickly dissolves when a major triggering device (Cobb & Elder, 1972) or focusing event (Kingdon, 1995) occurs in which rapid and drastic changes can take place. These critical events represent a perceived disruption of the social order (Ballard, 2005). Birkland elaborately describes a focusing event as, “an event that is sudden; relatively uncommon; can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms; has harms that are concentrated in a particular geographical area or community of interest; and that is known to policy makers and the public simultaneously” (Birkland, 1998, p. 54). Clearly, acts of terrorism are sudden, reasonably defined as harmful, and become known to the policy makers and the public simultaneously.

Once a focusing event has occurred, an opportunity to address an issue sometimes presents itself through a policy window. “Despite their rarity, the major changes in

public policy result from the appearance of these opportunities” (Kingdon, 1995, p. 43). Many policy windows are predictable and therefore allow for the time and preparation required by advocates to push issues and solutions onto the agenda. Focusing events however, are unpredictable and can open equally unpredictable policy windows. Regardless of how the window opens, Kingdon (1995) concludes that policy windows rarely remain open for long periods of time.

In the case of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and in Oklahoma City, some events can become so large that they evolve into icons (Bennett & Lawrence, 1995). Lance Bennett and Regina Lawrence describe these major events as news icons which, “arise when dramatic, unexpected events prove irresistible to news organizations both because their imagery is so compelling and because the cultural and political tensions they raise are profound and troubling” (Bennett & Lawrence, 1995, p. 23).

Framing

Framing is a quality of communication that leads others to accept one meaning over another. The agenda setting function of the news media is not limited to directing public attention towards a particular issue or topic; it also colors public perceptions and understanding of an issue by assigning particular attributes to the object of focus. “From the pattern of the total news coverage, the public learns what journalists consider the important issues... from the details of this coverage - the agenda of attributes presented by the news media - the public forms its images” (McCombs, 1993, p. 8).

Frames speak to the effort of the news media to convey information in a direct and relevant manner, yet the immediate and unfiltered coverage of catastrophic events can

drastically define a moment in history regardless of ensuing reports. As Boomgaarden and de Vreese found while researching the impact of crisis events, “this coverage is powerful in shaping public opinion, and although immediate reactions can be mitigated by subsequent responses, the first reports on such events are crucial (Boomgaarden and Vreese, 2007).

Entman explains how “a frame operates to select and highlight some features of reality and obscure others in a way that tells a consistent story about problems, their causes, moral implications, and remedies” (Entman, 1996, pp. 77-78). In addition to providing a context for a problem, the media can also prime (Scheufele 2001) the audience by providing a prior reference point for the actors most frequently associated with the problem.

Real-world crisis events and natural disasters tend to launch the media into hype mode and “extraordinary attention peaks can cause changes in public attitudes not only in the immediate short term, but also for a prolonged period of time after the reporting peak has vanished” (Boomgaarden and de Vreese 2007, p. 3). Viewers are sensitive to contextual cues when they reason about national and international affairs to the extent that their explanations of issues like terrorism are critically dependent on the particular reference points furnished by media presentations.

Without experiencing acts of terrorism, war, and natural catastrophe themselves, the public absorbs information through news media frames, which can have a lasting impact on the outcome of the disaster (Edwards-Winslow 2002). While many researchers continue to challenge the power of the press, “politicians continue to assert the

importance of news media coverage in shaping policy responses to humanitarian crises” (Robinson, 2001, p. 524).

Yet, plenty of research argues that, “political elites excel at controlling political and media information environments, particularly in times of national crisis” (Domke, Graham et al., 2006, p. 291). Entman (2003), in his analysis of frames following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, proposed a “cascading network activation model” linking the elite, news organizations, news texts and the public. His model explains how “interpretive frames activate and spread from the top level of a stratified system (the White House) to the network of non-administration elites, and on to news organizations, their texts, and the public” (Entman, 2003, p. 415). This is most evident in times of elite consensus over an issue when “news media are unlikely to produce coverage that challenges that consensus” (Robinson, 2001, p. 531).

Following 9/11, Entman found that George W. Bush’s initial terror attack frame became the dominant frame used by the news media as 9/11 provided the president with “an opportunity to propound a line designed to revive habits of patriotic deference, to dampen elite dissent, dominate media texts, and reduce the threat of negative public reaction, (in other words) to work just as the Cold War paradigm once did” (Entman, 2003, p. 424). This suggests that the power of framing lies not with the media, but with the political elites.

Terrorist attacks transcend the agenda-setting process through crisis and disorder. As the public attempts to understand these disruptive events, they call upon the news media to provide the narrative. While the earliest reports may be speculative and incomplete,

they can have a lasting impact in shaping forthcoming perceptions and recollections of the events.

Should the news media disproportionately emphasize terrorism at the expense of other issues, the public may infer that terrorism presents a greater threat to society despite low attack statistics. If the media downplays terrorism, the public may feel less threatened and focus more attention on other salient issues. As for labeling the actors, the audience may be primed by the media's definition of terrorists ("us" versus "them") if they routinely externalize the threat by emphasizing one group (i.e. Middle Eastern Muslims) while excluding others (i.e. American Caucasians).

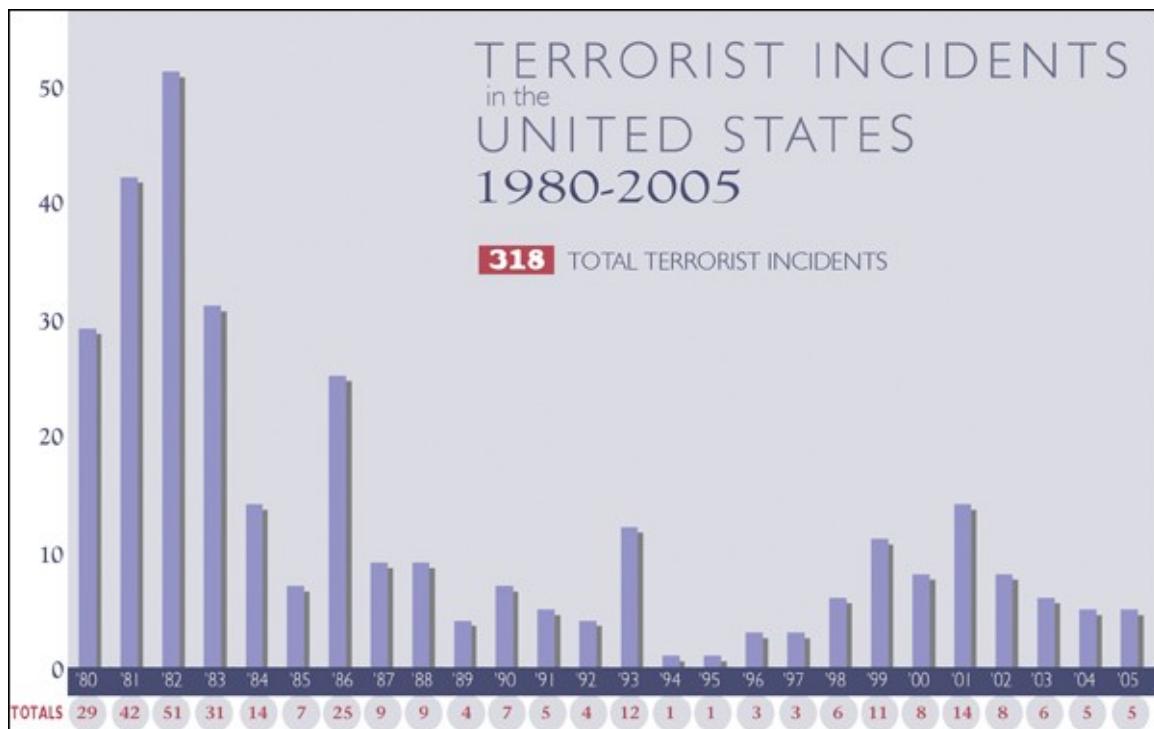
In short, the way each event and its actors are defined and presented by news organizations may directly affect their longevity on the agenda, unduly stereotype suspects, color public opinion, and potentially impact corresponding policies.

The Power of Terrorism

Terrorism affects the manner in which governments conduct their foreign policy and influences how and where we travel (Combs, 2007). Statistically speaking however, incidents of terrorism in the United States have never risen to the high levels of the early 1980s and have steadily declined since 2001 according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual *Terrorism in the United States* report (Terrorism in the United States, 2005).

According to the FBI, combined terrorist incidents happening in America and its territories between 1980 and 2005 totaled 318, half of which occurred between 1980 and 1984 (167), the heaviest period of activity. While spikes were seen in 1986, 1993, 1999,

and 2001, they never approached the record levels established more than 25 years ago. Such figures would appear to indicate that the likelihood of becoming the victim of a terror attack in the United States has steadily declined.



SOURCE: FBI

While terrorism may appear as a singular universal term, multiple classifications and distinctions render it a much more intricate concept, especially when federal agencies have their own series of conflicting definitions. Included among the 318 incidents listed above by the FBI as “terrorist incidents” there are countless cases of arson, sabotage, assault, shootings, hostile takeovers, kidnappings, smoke bombings, malicious destruction, and theft. While it is clear that the average person would consider most of the events crimes, it is unclear how many of them would be perceived as acts of terrorism. It is even more unclear how many of them would be labeled terrorism by the press, especially when Livingston’s findings suggest most violent acts associated with

terrorism are generally not labeled as such by the media (Livingston, 1994).

Despite the sizable variety of crimes included in their text the FBI provides the most elaborate and inclusive definition for terrorism, one which has been used as a standard reference by countless researchers including Kern, Just, and Norris (2003).

Domestic Terrorism is the unlawful use, or threatened use, of force or violence by a group or individual based and operating entirely within the United States or its territories without foreign direction committed against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. ***International Terrorism*** involves violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any state, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or any state. These acts appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping. International terrorist acts occur outside the United States or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to coerce or intimidate, or the locale in which the perpetrators operate or seek asylum. (FBI, 2005).

It is important to note that while terrorist attacks are generally considered violent acts, not all violent acts are considered terrorism. Once the term terrorism has been assigned however, it can have powerful ramifications on the way in which one event is framed in relation to another. It will also increase its prominence in the news (Livingston, 1994).

Terrorist networks and organizations are as divergent as the causes they collude behind, but their common objective is to attract attention. In order for terrorists to raise awareness for their cause, earn support from sympathizers, and generate fear, they must have publicity (Perl, 1997). To maximize effect, operatives frequently execute strategic attacks in areas with high media and public visibility opportunities. By capturing media attention “terrorists are able to generate awareness of themselves far beyond what their

numbers – or the number of casualties they cause – otherwise warrants” (Livingston, 1994).

The psychological construct of fear appeals through threats of pain, injury, or death, is the most persuasive aspect of terrorist tactics. They have the ability to “exploit evolutionary hardwired survival mechanisms meant for coping with a clear and present danger” (Bowdish, 2007, p. 390). As Thomas C. Schelling writes:

“It is the threat of damage, or of more damage to come, that can make someone yield or comply. It is the latent violence that can influence someone’s choice – violence that can still be withheld or inflicted. The threat of pain tries to structure one’s motives, while brute force tries to overcome his strength. Whether it is sheer terroristic violence to induce an irrational response, or cool premeditated violence to persuade somebody that you mean it and you may do it again, it is not the pain and damage itself but its influence on somebody’s behavior that matters” (Schelling, 1966, p. 5).

While close proximity to an attack location is likely to increase localized anxiety, distance does not nullify threat perceptions. Norris, Kern, and Just found that “the often random, unpredictable, and indiscriminate impact of terrorist coercion upon its immediate victims heightens its ability to inspire anxiety, even among members far removed from its immediate vicinity, as well as generating widespread moral repugnance about the use of these techniques” (Norris, Kern & Just, 2003, p. 7).

Fear appeals have changed the outcomes of recent European elections, impacted foreign policies, lead to the withdrawal of coalition troops in Iraq, and fractured international alliances. Fear appeals have provided terrorist networks with a substantial source of hard power (Nye, 2004), the ability to influence the behavior or interests of political bodies through aggressive force.

While the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 1995 Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City were both classified as terrorist attacks, they were executed

by different organizations with different belief systems and motivations. The World Trade center attack was perpetrated by foreign-based actors while the Oklahoma City bombing, was committed by homegrown radicals.

These seemingly simple differences not only determine which branches of local and federal government respond to and process the attacks; they also affect overall understandings of the threat and the manner in which the stories are portrayed by the news media.

Events Selected for Analysis

1993 World Trade Center Bombing (New York City)

On Friday, February 26th, 1993, a massive explosion occurred when a bomb in excess of 1,000 pounds was detonated in the public parking garage of the World Trade Center in New York City killing six, injuring more than 1,000, and causing more than \$300 million in damages.

Early media reports first suggested that a generator had exploded before special agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's New York office concluded that an improvised explosive device had in fact been activated. The blast's epicenter was traced to the remains of a yellow Ryder van located underneath the northeast corner of the Vista Hotel.

The terrorists prepared for the attack in November of 1992, completing a 1,500-pound bomb, which was later placed in the rental van below the World Trade Center. The timer-detonated bomb left a crater seven-stories deep. Two years after the attack, Egyptian

cleric Sheik Omar Abd al-Rahman and nine other suspects, including Sudanese, Egyptian, Jordanian, and American citizens, were convicted of conspiracy and related charges.

Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, believed to be the mastermind behind the attack, received a life sentence plus 240 years in prison in 1998. In October of 1999, Siddig Ibrahim Siddig Ali received 11 years in prison for participating in a plot to blow up New York City landmarks and to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. While there was no concrete evidence, Osama bin Laden and his network of terrorists were suspected of being involved in the attack (Manning, 2001; Parachini, 2000; Rubin & Colle, 2006; Williams, 1998).

1995 Murrah Federal Building Bombing (Oklahoma City)

On April 19th, 1995, just after 9:00 a.m., a massive truck bomb exploded in front of the Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, leveling half of the nine-story facility and killing a total of 168 people. Considered the worst domestic terrorist attack in the United States' history (Steiker, 2001), a horrified nation watched as rescue workers pulled the lifeless bodies of men, women, and children from the wreckage for several weeks.

Ninety minutes after the explosion, a highway patrol officer pulled over 27-year-old Timothy McVeigh for driving a car without a license plate. While the activity was suspicious enough to attract police attention, no connection to the bombing took place at the time. However, shortly before his release from police custody on April 21st, McVeigh was identified as a suspect and charged with the bombing. Terry Nichols, McVeigh's former army buddy, voluntarily surrendered to police in Herington, Kansas once he

discovered that he was wanted for questioning and was later charged as a co-conspirator in the bombing.

In June of 1997, a jury convicted McVeigh for the Oklahoma City bombing and eventually sentenced him to death. McVeigh was executed by lethal injection on June 11th, 2001, exactly four months before the United States would face its most devastating terrorist attack to date. Nichols was tried separately and after deliberating for 41 hours, the jury in his trial refused to convict Nichols of murder. They found him guilty of involuntary manslaughter and of conspiring with McVeigh. He was later sentenced to life in prison by a federal judge. (CNN Interactive, 1996 & 1997).

Coverage of both bombing trials was also included to determine if the labels changed as more information became available to the news media. If early news reports did have the potential to shape long term perceptions of the attacks and those committing them, the labels should remain consistent across time.

Research Questions

Each of the events represents two dissimilar groups committing very similar attacks. This presents an ideal opportunity to test the externalized threat hypothesis by comparing actor and action labels between “us” (Caucasian Americans) and “them” (Foreign, Middle Eastern Muslims) as independent variables with the action (bombing) as the dependent variable. It also presents an opportunity to review terrorism coverage prior to 9/11, the dominant focus of terrorism research for the last seven years.

This thesis will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How are Americans, particularly Caucasians, labeled when committing terrorist activities in comparison to other international actors?

2. Are their actions defined as acts of terrorism or assigned another label?
3. Which sources (media or government elites) provide the bulk of the labels?

Chapter 3: Methods

Content Analysis

This project was designed to test accusations that the American media tend to externalize threats of terrorism by analyzing frames through a content analysis of evening network news transcripts following two significant attacks on U.S. soil during the mid-1990s.

Evening network newscasts were selected because “they are an enduring and established form of communication...routinely consulted by the public for information, news, and commentary related to public events” (Ballard, 2005) and because “television – with its dependence on visual images and its live coverage – provides an attractive stage for shocking terrorist dramas” (Nacos, 1994).

Researchers from a variety of perspectives and theoretical traditions have also argued that television is more emotionally arousing than print media (Cho et al, 2003, p. 309) and several polls conducted after terror events through 2001 suggests that most of the nation still turned to television to find out what was happening (Taylor, 2001). Internet usage and web reporting was also not as prevalent between 1993 and 1995 as it is today (let alone on 9/11) placing television as the then-dominant medium for breaking news. The coverage is immediate, best captures the initial impact as an event unfolds, and in most cases, provides the first news frame.

Variables

The analysis, inspired in part by previous research published by Livingston in the early 1990s analyzing terrorism framing by The New York Times, was designed to

identify several important variables within the coverage: *Label*, *Action*, *Target*, and *Source* (Livingston, 1994). Livingston defined these variables as “who (label) did what (violent action) to whom (target of violent action) according to whom (source of these descriptive terms)” (Livingston, 1994, p. 68). This model is routinely cited in terrorism studies and perfectly suited to this study as I intend to identify whether or not the actors were referred to as terrorists (label); if their actions were referred to as acts of terrorism (action); how their victims were labeled (target); and who was defining all three (source).

Expanding on Livingston’s model, I also recorded the length of each story in minutes and seconds (*Segment Length*); whether or not it was the first story to appear in each broadcast (*Segment Proximity*); whether or not it was presented as an *Incident of Terrorism*, and if it was further classified as being *International* or *Domestic* in origin.

International and Domestic codes were assigned using the FBI’s standard definitions in which international terrorism involves actors based outside of America’s borders committing crimes within the United States, while domestic terrorism involves actors based and operating entirely within the United States without any foreign direction (FBI, 2005).

Kuypers (2002) concludes that the real power of a frame lies not in word frequency, but in its consistent use over time. Therefore, I chose to code each news segment as a single entity reviewing the overall framing of the stories. If an anchor, reporter, or other source repeatedly defined the action as an act of terrorism throughout a given story then the story itself was coded as an incident of terrorism.

If the action was repeatedly defined as a bombing, the story was coded as a bombing. In most cases, this was supported by word counts in which one term clearly outnumbered

another. In some cases, the lead reference, usually provided by an anchor or on-site reporter, clearly framed the story as an incident of terrorism as the following examples illustrate.

Coding Examples

Anchor / Reporter	Broadcast Quote	Coding
ABC Anchor Ted Koppel Nightline: April 19, 1995	"It's likely to be the most deadly <i>terrorist attack</i> America has ever seen. But no one knows for sure if the danger is over, how many more dead and injured will be discovered, and if and when the <i>terrorists</i> will be captured."	Incident Of Terrorism
CBS Reporter Scott Pelley April 20, 1995	"Harry, arrest warrants are being drawn up, a reward is being offered for two suspects in the <i>bombing</i> . The FBI believes they are the men who rented the truck that carried the <i>bomb</i> ."	Bombing

Segment length and proximity are essential variables to consider when it comes to measuring the potential impact broadcast news stories may have. A seven-minute lead story on terrorism should capture the attention of more viewers than a 90-second segment appearing fifteen minutes into the program. The two variables also help to illustrate the peaks, declines, and inevitable absence of interest in any given story on the media agenda.

Data Collection

First, I examined the evening network news broadcast transcripts from *ABC*, *CBS*, and *NBC* using both *LexisNexis* and the *Vanderbilt Television News Archives (FOX)*

transcripts were not included due to their unavailability from either archive source). For each of the two events selected for review, I analyzed the first full month of consecutive broadcasts directly following each attack. Since both attacks took place during the morning hours, special attention was also given to breaking news reports and special bulletins airing within the first 24 hours for both the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings.

Then, I analyzed the subsequent trial coverage for both using two-week intervals coinciding with the jury selection, opening statements, verdict, and final sentencing (see coverage timeline breakdowns on the next page). In the case of Timothy McVeigh, I also included the coverage leading up to his execution. The complete number of broadcast transcripts reviewed for this project totaled 441.

Using the *Vanderbilt Television Archive*, I chronologically reviewed every evening network broadcast transcript in its entirety during the timeframes mentioned earlier. In addition to determining their overall framing, I was able to accurately record *Segment Proximity* and *Segment Length*. Reviewing the transcripts day by day also allowed me to verify more conclusively whether or not the events received any coverage at all, rather than just assuming my search terms captured every broadcast.

I ran a second series of searches through *LexisNexis* in order to cross check the transcripts previously sourced and analyzed through Vanderbilt and to collect any potential missing broadcasts. In both cases, search terms were expanded beyond World Trade Center and Oklahoma City to include as many references to each event as possible in an effort to capture a more inclusive collection of documents.

In addition to using the actual names of the suspects themselves, expanded terms also included: terror, terrorist, terrorism, bomb, bombing, explosion, blast, militia, anti-government, Middle Eastern, Arab, Muslim, Moslem, Islam, and Islamic. Within the results of the sub-searches, I then searched for the two original terms using *LexisNexis*' *FOCUS* feature to eliminate duplicates and isolate articles that only used the secondary terms when referring to the events. Any stories that superceded or eliminated the coverage of any of the four stories within the analysis were classified as *Competing Coverage*.

Coverage Timelines

The coverage timelines for each event were broken down into one full month of consecutive broadcasts for each bombing, followed by two week installments of consecutive coverage for each phase of the subsequent trials.

The World Trade Center bombing took place on February 26, 1993 so my search parameters for the first month of coverage were set between February 26 and March 26, 1993. The six month trial began on September 13, 1993 setting the first two consecutive week parameters between September 13 and September 27, 1993. The jury conviction took place on March 4, 1994 setting the next set of coverage parameters between March 4 and March 18, 1994. On May 25, 1994, the four defendants were sentenced to 240 years in prison setting my final set of coverage parameters for the World Trade Center bombing trial between May 25 and June 7, 1994.

The Oklahoma City bombing took place on April 19, 1995 so my search parameters for the first month of coverage were set between April 19 and May 23, 1995. The trial

began on April 24, 1997 and ran consecutively through June 2, 1997 setting my first set of coverage parameters between April 24 and June 2, 1997. Timothy McVeigh's execution was scheduled for June 11, 2001 so my final set of coverage parameters for the Oklahoma City bombing trial was between June 4 and June 18, 2001. Roughly six weeks worth of coverage was analyzed for each of the trials with two extra weeks leading up to McVeigh's execution.

Chapter 4: Findings

Network News Analysis

The Oklahoma City bombing coverage significantly outnumbered that of the World Trade Center bombing with the first receiving a combined total of 106 broadcast stories versus just 61 for the latter. This is not a shocking revelation by any means, especially when one compares the amounts of damage and death between the two events, with the Murrah Federal Building claiming the lion's share in both categories.

Network	World Trade Center Bombing Stories	Oklahoma City Bombing Stories
ABC	22	43
CBS	20	34
NBC	19	29

N=61

N=106

The trial coverage between the two cases is even more disproportionate across the network evening news with the Oklahoma City trial receiving nearly 10 times as many broadcasts (114) as the World Trade Center trial (12).

Network	World Trade Center Trial Stories	Oklahoma City Trial Stories
ABC	4	38
CBS	5	38
NBC	3	38

N=12

N=114

While this may seem disjointed at first glance, there are several important factors to point out. Coverage of the Oklahoma City bombing itself, and the ongoing investigation, superseded all other stories at the time including that of the concurrent World Trade Center trial. The Oklahoma City trial also lasted longer and included an extra phase with the execution of Timothy McVeigh. A breakdown of additional news items which

significantly interrupted and/or eliminated the coverage of both the bombings and their subsequent trials, is featured within the results section under *Competing Coverage*.

Segment Proximity

While both of the bombings initially began as lead stories, Oklahoma City remained the first story during the evening newscasts more than twice as long as the World Trade Center and remained the lead story across all three networks for fourteen uninterrupted days. The Murrah Federal building bombing was finally trumped on May 3, 1995 by the political debate over containing the cost of Medicare on *ABC* and *NBC*, and by a terrorist plot to kill Pope John Paul II in the Philippines on *CBS*. While it periodically resurfaced as a lead story for another week and a half, it subsided by May 15th outside of investigation updates.

The World Trade Center bombing was interrupted as the lead story across the three networks after just two days by the shootout between federal agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and members of the Branch Davidian religious cult in Waco, Texas. The story briefly regained lead status when suspects were captured and the FBI officially designated it a terror attack, but by the eighth day of coverage Waco, the crisis in Bosnia, and the Rodney King trial buried the bombing well into the newscasts.

Lead Story	World Trade Center Bombing Stories	Oklahoma City Bombing Stories
Yes	27	72
No	34	34

N=61

N=106

Not surprisingly, the Oklahoma City bombing trial also earned more lead story placements than the World Trade Center trial. Unlike the 1995 bombing however,

overall segment proximity for the Oklahoma City trial was evenly split between the total number of lead stories and those placed further within the newscasts, whereas the World Trade center trial coverage was nearly twice as likely to end up appearing further into the news broadcasts.

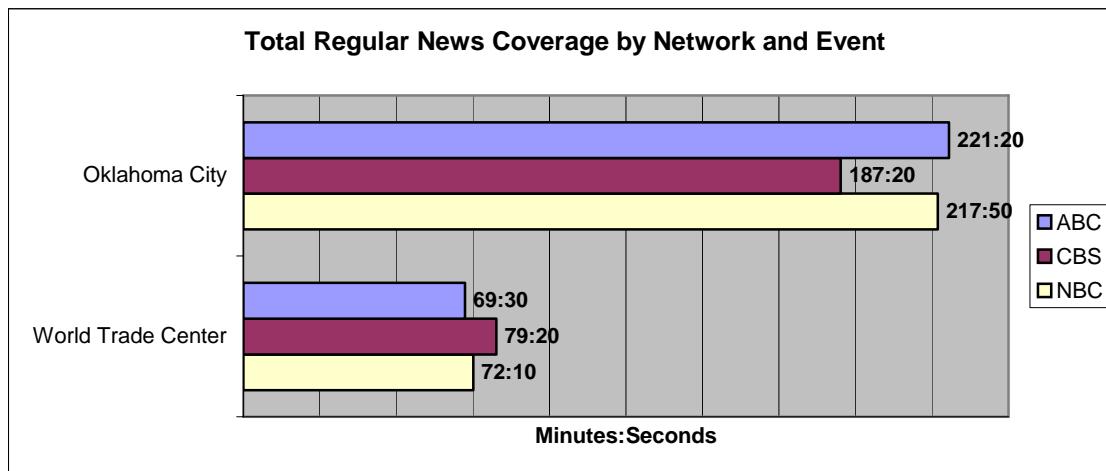
Lead Story	World Trade Center Trial Stories	Oklahoma City Trial Stories
Yes	4	56
No	7	58

N=12

N=114

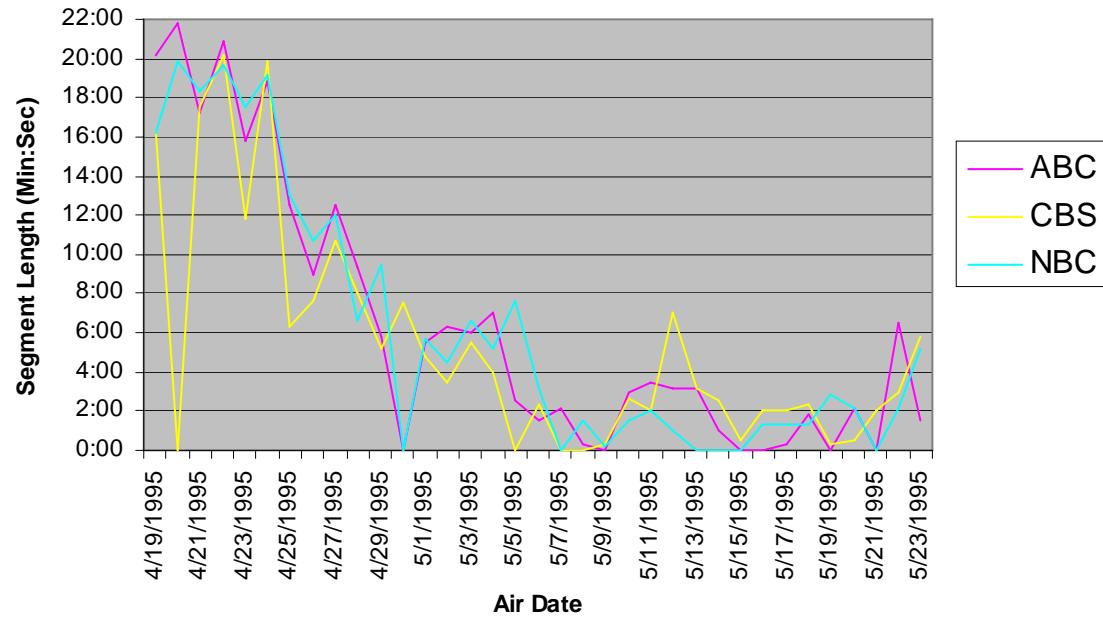
Segment Length

Overall, segment length was higher and lasted longer for the Oklahoma City bombing than that of the World Trade Center bombing. In total, all three networks devoted more than twice as much coverage to the Oklahoma City bombing than they did for the World Trade Center bombing.

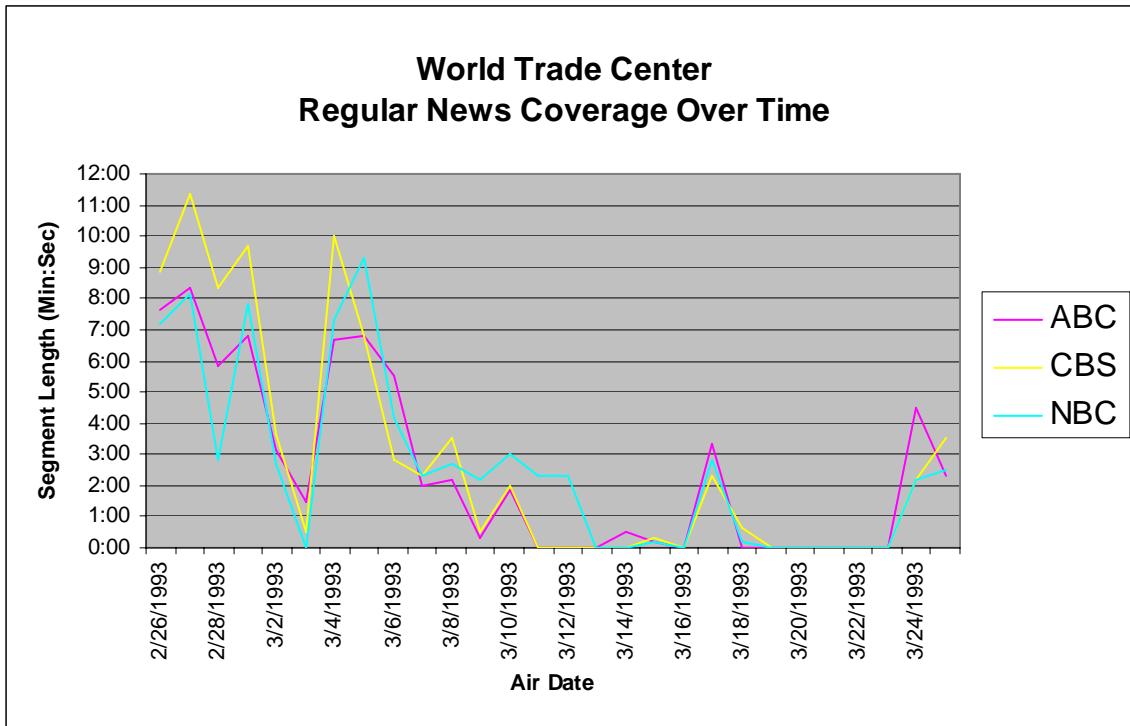


During the first six days of coverage, evening news segments averaged 15 to 20 minutes in length for the Oklahoma City bombing and did not reach the two-minute mark until the nineteenth day.

Oklahoma City Regular News Coverage Over Time



World Trade Center segments were somewhat shorter in length averaging 7 to 11 minutes. They were frequently interrupted by the ongoing Waco coverage and within 10 days the bombing stories averaged two minutes or less.



Framing The First 24 Hours: The World Trade Center Bombing

When a crisis breaks, the first 24 hours of media coverage can have an enduring impact on an event's long term framing as officials and reporters attempt to keep the public immediately informed while operating within an information vacuum.

Speculation that the World Trade Center bombing may have been an act of terrorism (as illustrated by the quotes on the following page) eventually replaced the furnace explosion theory as anchors and reporters pressed local officials, FBI Director William Sessions, and James M. Fox, Assistant Director in charge of the FBI's New York office, for a clear and definitive answer.

"As of this hour, seven people are dead, more than 500 have been hospitalized, 200 were treated on the scene, and there is growing reason to believe that the explosion was caused by a terrorist bomb."

- ABC Anchor Ted Koppel

"Extra security measures in Washington, DC, in the wake of yesterday's New York explosion that may have been an act of terrorism"

- CBS Reporter Rita Braver

"Sources close to the investigation tell CBS News that early evidence suggests the bomb was made of an unsophisticated explosive, possibly a combination of nitrate chemical fertilizer, dynamite and gasoline, a mix often used by terrorists."

- CBS Reporter Scott Pelley

Yet most officials were reluctant to specify any premature assumptions of terrorism.

Skip Brandon, Deputy Assistant FBI Director, admitted there was an explosion during an interview with ABC's Nightline on the evening of the attack but did not speculate beyond that when asked by anchor Ted Koppel if this was indeed an act of terrorism:

"Well, we still don't know exactly what has happened. We don't know until we can get people on the ground into the blast area. We still can't do that at this point because the fires are still going. So it'll be a while before we know exactly what's happened. Obviously there's been a terrible tragedy, an explosion of some sort."

Two days later during an interview with CBS news, James M. Fox indicated that they were looking into all possibilities, but was still not willing to speculate on suspects:

"A blast of this size indicates that it--it was probably unlikely that it was a lone individual. We are not jumping to the conclusion that it is a terrorist incident perpetrated by any--any particular group, but that is a possibility and our investigation will look at that possibility very closely."

It would take twelve full days until the FBI's William Sessions officially declared before a Congressional committee that the bombing of the World Trade Center was the first international terrorist act in the U.S. in 10 years on March 9, 1993. Ironically, this pivotal and quite historic revelation was reduced to little more than 20 and 30 second sound bites during the ABC and CBS broadcasts respectively with NBC devoting slightly more airtime at two minutes and ten seconds. This particular finding conflicts with

Livingston's earlier print analysis where events gained more news prominence once they were labeled as terrorism.

Was the apparent hesitancy by officials to label the bombing an act of terrorism due to a lengthy investigation or were there other reasons? Why did the media all but pass on what should have been a significant follow-up to their ongoing series of priority newscasts?

While I'm tempted to say that an attack on U.S. soil flummoxed the media and officials who were used to externalizing such threats, the real answer (at least concerning the media) may lie in the competing coverage of the Rodney King trial, Janet Reno confirmation hearings, and the Waco, Texas stand-off, all of which replaced the World Trade Center bombing as the lead story on March 9th.

The ongoing stand-off in Waco interrupted coverage of the World Trade Center bombing 18 times, more than any other story, and did so within two days of the bombing. This suggests the dramatic life and death narrative of the 51-day siege between David Koresh's Branch Davidian religious sect and the federal government was far more newsworthy to an event-driven media than a single truck bombing in New York City days earlier. While crisis events have the power to dominate the news, they are just as easily usurped by the next crisis event.

When it came to postulating the origin of the bombers domestic groups never entered the discussion as the media focused exclusively on international perpetrators. While some reports proposed a possible link with the ongoing Yugoslavian conflicts, Middle Eastern actors were portrayed as the more likely choice with Iran and Iraq placed firmly in the

crosshairs of open speculation. The following quotes illustrate media reports externalizing the threat.

“Well first of all, there has yet been no claim of responsibility for this bombing, although if you talk to intelligence sources and to law enforcement officials, they all say in their early guess in this situation is that this particular bombing probably has roots in the Middle East.”

- ABC Reporter John McWethy

“The World Trade Center bombing: a suspect is under arrest. Is there a link to international terrorist groups in the Middle East?”

- CBS Anchor Dan Rather

“The leaks in Washington are very similar, that is to say that they connect this person who has been arrested to a terrorist group somehow linked to the Middle East.”

- CBS Reporter Bill Plante

Framing The First 24 Hours: The Oklahoma City Bombing

In the case of the Oklahoma City bombing, the first 24 hours worth of reports ran incongruous to the actual events with just one reporter suggesting a possible domestic connection. Despite obvious speculation and prodding by the news media, officials were once again hesitant to define the event as an act of terrorism. When a CBS reporter asked Attorney General Janet Reno if it was safe to assume this was a terrorist attack of some kind Reno stated:

“I would not characterize it as such until the evidence is in. But we are pursuing every piece of evidence with whatever motivation is behind it.”

President Clinton’s address to the nation on April 19th also excluded any references to terrorism. Instead, he referred to the event as a “crisis” and a “tragedy,” labeling the culprits as “killers” and using the term “bombing” as a defining reference:

“The bombing in Oklahoma City was an attack on innocent children and defenseless citizens. It was an act of cowardice and it was evil. The United States

will not tolerate it, and I will not allow the people of this country to be intimidated by evil cowards. I have met with our team, which we assembled to deal with this bombing, and I have determined to take the following steps to assure the strongest response to this situation.”

Regarding the point of origin for the attacks, the earliest reports once again implicated Middle Eastern perpetrators as the most likely suspects with many on-site reporters drawing direct comparisons to the Beirut bombings of 1983. Additional news reports connecting the 1993 World Trade Center bombing extended the Middle Eastern theory even further.

“In fact, it- it's our understanding that there may be individuals who were involved in the World Trade Center bombing that occurred in February of 1993.”

- ABC News Reporter Catherine Crier

“Today's attack was similar to the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, and similar to attacks on US forces in Beirut in the 1980s. That has investigators looking for a possible link to Middle East terrorists right here in the American Midwest.”

- CBS Anchor Connie Chung

There was at least one early CBS news report citing intelligence sources, which suggested that the bombing may have been committed by domestic actors seeking revenge for the Federal raid in Waco, Texas two years earlier, but it was quickly dismissed as the following report from Jim Stewart illustrates:

“First intelligence reports in this case suggested a revenge attack by the Branch Davidians, many of whose members were killed in a raid by federal agents two years ago today in Waco, Texas. Now the betting here, however, is on Middle Eastern terrorists with a far bigger agenda.”

Early Middle Eastern references are partially explainable due to the FBI's earliest alert that they were in fact looking for three Middle Eastern men wanted for questioning in connection with the explosion followed by the early arrest of Ibrahim Ahmad, a Jordanian-American traveling from his home in Oklahoma City to visit family in Jordan.

While Ahmad was later cleared, Jim Lobe, bureau chief for Inter Press Service, told the American Journalism Review that tying the bombing solely to the Middle East "was in a sense a comforting story for Americans" (cited in Fuchs, 1995) who were accustomed to externalizing threats of terrorism and stereotyping Arabs.

Within 24 hours however, the focus immediately shifted to two white-male suspects followed by the arrest of Timothy McVeigh, prompting many anchors and reporters to publicly lick their wounds as the following *ABC Day One* transcript from April 20, 1995 illustrates:

DIANE SAWYER (Anchor): *I want to start with you, if I can, John, because it really is quite a shift from yesterday. And I suppose it's cultural conditioning - we have to acknowledge it - that makes us think of terrorists in the Mideast first. When did you sense from your sources that things were starting to shift?*

JOHN MCWETHY (Reporter): *Well, about midway through the day. And it's not just cultural conditioning. I would say that the evidence has led the journalists to certain preliminary conclusions and then the evidence has led us to additional conclusions that are away from the direction I think the FBI was headed, at least in the first 24 hours.*

Initially, as they looked at that evidence, they said, 'Boy, this has all of the fingerprints, absolutely all of the fingerprints, with roots from the Middle East, that kind of expertise.' But as they began to develop leads on these two white males, the so-called 'John Does' that they are now tracking and seeking, it became clearer and clearer to some of the investigators, anyway, that perhaps they had been going down the wrong path, that this looked more and more like some sort of revenge approach. And they- they haven't ruled out, by the way, any of the Middle East routes, but it looked more and more like these two men may have done it all by themselves.

This clearly supports the argument that terrorists were routinely portrayed as an external threat and not as a homegrown problem. While McWethy attempts to downplay the cultural conditioning, which initially prompted them to associate the bombing with Middle Eastern terrorists because of their reliance on government sources, he clearly states that the journalists drew their own conclusions contrary to those of the FBI.

The fact that government sources also speculated international actors supports earlier arguments made by Floden & Kaufer (2002), Kuzma (2000), and Nacos (1994), in which the bulk of the country's then-existing terrorism policies addressed international sources driven in part by high level decision makers preoccupied with terrorism abroad. Both the media and the government were caught off guard once it was revealed that the bombing was committed by one of our own citizens, who just happened to look like any other white American.

Labeling the Action of the Two Bombings

When it came to labeling the action of the two incidents, the majority of the stories in the sample of evening network newscasts used “bombing” as the primary label for both events. *NBC* was the first network to theorize that the explosion in New York City was the work of terrorist bombers during their 5:30 p.m. broadcast on the evening of the attack followed by *CBS* during a special report at 11:30 p.m. and by *ABC* at 11:32 p.m. during the *Nightline* special broadcast *Target: The Towers*.

Overall however 56 percent of the World Trade center stories used “bombing” as the primary label followed by 25 percent using “explosion” and just 18 percent using “terrorism.” The World Trade Center attack initially began with generic reports of an explosion, but quickly morphed into speculation that it was a bombing.

Action	World Trade Center Bombing Stories
Terrorism	18% (11)
Explosion	25% (15)
Bombing	56% (34)
Blast	1% (1)
Attack	0
Other	0

As time moved on and the reports became shorter in duration, the earlier terrorism label diminished and the attack was almost exclusively referred to as a bombing. Story segments began to feature regular updates on the “bombing investigation” and the search for the “bombers.” This was also apparent in the trial coverage as well. Secondary coverage focused heavily on Islamic fundamentalism and terrorist groups throughout the Middle East.

While the World Trade Center attack was briefly reported as an explosion, Oklahoma City was instantly referred to as a bombing with all fingers pointing to various terrorist factions and countries in the Middle East. Frequently framed as the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history, CBS ran a series of special programs entitled *Terror in the Heartland* within the first 24 hours of coverage. This label was also used by NBC’s Tom Brokaw on multiple occasions. In stark contrast, ABC’s *Nightline* routinely labeled the story as *The Bombing in Oklahoma* during their first full week of coverage.

Even though the percentage of stories using the “terrorism” label increased by nearly a third to 31 percent in comparison to just 18 percent for the 1993 incident, a full 69 percent of the stories perpetuated the “bombing” label.

Action	Oklahoma City Bombing Stories
Terrorism	31% (33)
Explosion	0
Bombing	69% (73)
Blast	0
Attack	0
Other	0

Whenever terrorism did surface it was used to identify the Oklahoma City bombing as the “deadliest terrorist attack in American history” which originally coincided with speculations of international terrorists. As the story progressed and the suspects were named and arrested the label quickly transformed into a “bombing” and the ongoing ‘bombing investigation’ within three days. Secondary coverage addressed anti-government groups, militias, and hate speech.

The dominant use of bombing in place of terrorism for both events supports Livingston’s earlier findings where *New York Times* reporters exhibited a “tendency to avoid the use of the ambiguous yet emotionally charged labels terrorism and terrorist” (Livingston, 1994, p. 72). According to Livingston’s research, 85 percent of the violent incidents listed below were not designated as terrorism.

TABLE 4.3 Action Type by Mention of Terrorism

Action	Terrorism Mentioned		Total
	No	Yes	
Other	94% (94)	6% (6)	(100)
Bomb	81% (77)	19% (18)	(95)
Shooting	82% (72)	18% (16)	(88)
Car Bomb	87% (20)	13% (3)	(23)
Hijacking	100% (12)	0% (0)	(12)
Kidnapping	100% (7)	0% (0)	(7)
Total	N=(282)	N=(43)	

Source: *The Terrorism Spectacle*

Differences between “terrorism” and “bombing” may appear trivial on the surface, but use of the word “terrorism” can activate fear appeals and heighten perceptions of personal threat levels greater than “bombing” or “explosion” labels can on their own. They also provide different problem definitions and remedies (Entman, 1996).

Solutions to the problem also vary depending on the label. Terrorism cases are investigated and prosecuted by different agencies operating under specific policies. Public perceptions as to what solutions may be adequate to address the problem are also dependent on the assigned label. Whether or not they believe they are facing a solitary local bomber or an international terrorist network, can drastically impact their understandings of appropriate remedies.

Labeling the Action Part 2: The Trials

The trial coverage for the World Trade Center bombing within my time parameters was briefer than I had anticipated despite using multiple search methods. The consistent lack of trial coverage became clearer once I discovered the iconic events featured in the competing coverage section of this thesis, which included the Oklahoma City bombing itself.

Coverage for both trials overwhelmingly labeled the action as a bombing with regular updates on the ongoing “bombing trials” and the cases against the “bombing suspects.” The World Trade center trial labeled the action as a “bombing” in 92 percent of the stories. While the Oklahoma City trial offered more terrorism labels, 72 percent of the stories framed the action as a “bombing” compared to just 28 percent as an act of “terrorism.”

Action	WTC Trial Stories	O. City Trial Stories
Terrorism	8% (1)	28% (31)
Explosion	0	0
Bombing	92% (11)	72% (83)
Blast	0	0
Attack	0	0
Other	0	0

This follows the coverage patterns of the attacks themselves, which overwhelmingly used “bombing” as the primary label describing the action. I anticipated more terrorism labels for the World Trade Center bombing and trial stories due to the nationalities of the bombers, but this was not the case in my sample. An analysis of other attacks committed within America’s borders during the 1990s such as the Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta in 1996 and abortion clinic bombings in 1997 and 1998 may provide more insight.

Labeling the Actors: World Trade Center Bombing

When it came to speculating the geographic origins of the actors, all of the coverage for the 1993 bombing suggested international terrorists. The attacks may have happened locally, but the threat itself was clearly externalized. The list of likely suspects responsible ran far and wide with the FBI suspecting groups of Serbian nationalists and the Palestinian organizations Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Other news reports explored possible connections with Iran and Iraq, a trend that conveniently resurfaced following the attacks of September 11, 2001. Not a single broadcast suggested local actors.

“Islamic Fundamentalist” proved the dominant label describing the actors in 88 percent of the stories, usually combined with the full names of the suspects. Omar Abdel Rahman was portrayed as the “radical sheik” mastermind, with Islamic fundamentalist Mohammed Salameh committing the crime. Only 12 percent of the stories labeled the actors as either terrorists (6%) or bombers (6%).

Label (Actors)	WTC Stories
Terrorists	6% (2)
Bombers	6% (2)
Suspects	0
Unknown Suspects	0
Islamic Fundamentalists	88% (30)
Other / Unspecified	0

Labeling the Actors: Oklahoma City Bombing

The early Oklahoma City coverage almost exclusively postulated that the attack was the result of international terrorists with the first reports specifically listing Middle Eastern men as the likely actors (2 percent) while 11 reports listed unknown foreign suspects (12 percent).

Label (Actors)	O. City Stories
Terrorists	2% (2)
Home Grown Terrorists	1% (1)
Unknown Foreign Suspects	12% (11)
Middle Eastern Men	2% (2)
Two White Males	2% (2)
Bombers	78% (71)
Right-Wing Militia	2% (2)

Once McVeigh was revealed as the actor, domestic terrorism was used to frame the ironic twist that international terrorists were not behind the attacks. The emphasis on domestic terror, and terrorism in general quickly faded from the coverage within six days with 78 percent of the subsequent reports referring to McVeigh exclusively by name, prefaced by “suspected” or “alleged bomber.” This was particularly noticeable as the event shifted from a bombing to an investigation within the first three days.

Oklahoma City became an anomaly, despite the fact that the actors and their actions satisfied every official definition of terrorist and terrorism. The domestic terrorism label was not prevalent within the coverage, and terrorism in general was only visible in one

third of the stories (see page 34). Coverage of the ongoing investigation and America's militia and anti-government groups resembled that of traditional newscasts covering national crimes with the FBI and the Department of Justice providing plenty of commentary. While his actions may have been labeled as terrorism in 31 percent of the stories, the media did not label McVeigh as a terrorist himself.

The Oklahoma City results run parallel to the findings Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston published regarding the media's reluctance to use the term torture when referring to American suspects involved in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. They found that just 3 percent of the stories analyzed used torture as the primary label with 81 percent using the less damaging abuse label (Bennett, Lawrence & Livingston, 2007). Just as the abuse categorization eclipsed torture as the primary label in their findings describing the actions of American soldiers, terrorism was eclipsed by bombing as the primary label in the Oklahoma City coverage once Americans were revealed as the actors.

Public opinion polls following the bombing further highlights the perceived disconnect between domestic actors and terrorists. Prior to 1995, Kuzma found "no public opinion survey questioning the source of the terrorist threat" (Kuzma, 2000, p. 95) perpetuating the common assumption that terrorists were not Americans. Two years after the bombing, 73 percent of those responding to a Gallup poll suggested that responsibility for the Oklahoma City bombing was not limited to Terry Nichols and Timothy McVeigh and that "others might have been involved in the incident" (Jones, 2000, p. 2).

Persistent international conspiracy theories even led California congressman, Dana Rohrabacher to chair an official investigation by the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the U.S. House Committee on International Relations into whether or

not the Oklahoma City bombers had assistance from foreign sources in 2006, 11 years after the bombing itself (Rohrabacher, 2006).

Labeling the Actors: World Trade Center Trial

Trial coverage for the World Trade Center bombing evenly emphasized the terrorist and radicalized Muslim labels when describing actors rather than labeling them as bombing suspects or bombers. 33 percent of the stories labeled the actors as terrorists followed by another 33 percent using either “Muslim Fundamentalist” or “Radical Muslim” as the primary descriptors. An additional 22 percent of the stories simply labeled the actors as “Muslims.”

Label (Actors)	WTC Trial Stories
Terrorists	33% (3)
Muslims	22% (2)
(Radical) Muslim Fundamentalists	33% (3)
Four Men	12% (1)
Other	0

While the bombing itself was only labeled as an act of terrorism in 18 percent of the stories, the actors themselves were vilified to a much higher degree. Emphasis on their foreign origin and radicalized religion clearly supports the external threat argument, especially when compared to that of the Oklahoma City trial.

“Chief Correspondent Chris Wallace questions the man whose fiery sermons in New Jersey call for violence on behalf of Islam. His followers have been linked to a series of murders, including former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and New York Rabbi Meir Kahane - the man who's on the government's list of suspected terrorists, now on the verge of being deported. Tonight, Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman.”

- ABC Anchor Diane Sawyer

“He is known around the world now as the incendiary Islamic minister who preaches holy war against the government of Egypt, and is said to be the shadowy figure behind the World Trade Center bombing.”

- ABC Anchor Chris Wallace

“Mohammed Salameh, a Jordanian who is in this country illegally on an expired tourist visa and who is described as a Muslim fundamentalist, was charged with aiding and abetting in the Trade Center bombing.”

- CBS Reporter Giselle Fernandez

Labeling the Actors: Oklahoma City Trial

The primary actor accused of committing the attack was not referred to as a terrorist within my sample of evening newscasts. In fact, McVeigh was labeled a “bombing suspect” in 77 percent of the trial stories or as a “bomber” in an additional 20 percent. The remaining 3 percent of the stories simply referred to McVeigh by name as in the “Timothy McVeigh Trial.”

Label (Actors)	O. City Stories
Terrorists	0
Bombing Suspect	77% (88)
Bomber	20% (23)
Named Suspects	3% (3)
Other / Unspecified	0

Many of the stories attempted to analyze and comprehend McVeigh’s disdain for the federal government, his connections with the radical Michigan Militia movement, and how a decorated veteran of the United States Army could have fallen from grace. Unlike the coverage of the World Trade Center bombers, there was an underlying, almost empathetic, attempt to identify some of the societal failures, which may have lead to McVeigh’s disillusionment. The media seemed more sympathetic when covering one of their own, insomuch as understanding his mindset, than they were in covering the 1993 bombers:

“And who is Timothy McVeigh? Renee Poussaint unravels the mystery with those who knew him best - the quiet teenager who became a solder and returned home an angry young man. After visiting Waco, he vowed revenge.”

- ABC Anchor Diane Sawyer

“In 1988, with no place for him on the family farm, Terry Nichols joined the Army, becoming the platoon leader of his company in basic training and almost instantly making a new best friend, Timothy McVeigh of suburban Buffalo, the man now charged in the bombing.”

- ABC Reporter Brian Ross

“We have a bit--just a bit--of new insight tonight into the mind of Timothy McVeigh from letters he wrote three years ago to his hometown newspaper. The Lockport, New York Union-Sun & Journal today republished the letters. In one, McVeigh complains about crime, taxes, and politicians, and he asks, quote, ‘Do we have to shed blood to reform the current system? I hope it doesn’t come to that,’ he says, ‘but it might.’”

- CBS Anchor Dan Rather

“Some believe the Oklahoma City bombing could have been avoided if the government had been more open about Waco.”

- CBS Reporter Richard Schlesinger

These findings once again run parallel to earlier theories suggesting that terrorists are typically perceived as external actors despite the obvious fact that the attack on the Murrah Federal Building clearly satisfied nearly all of the terrorism definitions in the FBI handbook.

Labeling the Target

While there were upwards of 1,000 people injured in the World Trade Center attack, only six people were killed. It would seem understandable therefore, that the coverage focused almost exclusively on the action and those committing the action rather than those injured or killed. The same was evident in the trial coverage, which did not specify

the target of the bombers action. In total only 10 stories addressed the target with “civilians” (20 percent) and “innocent victims” (30 percent) becoming the primary label.

Label (Target)	WTC Bombing Stories	WTC Trial Stories
Civilians	20% (2)	0
Civilians / School Children	10% (1)	0
Innocent Victims	30% (3)	0
Workers	10% (1)	0
Missing	10% (1)	0
Body	10% (1)	0
Victims by Name	10% (1)	0
Unspecified	0	100% (11)

The attack in Oklahoma City was much more devastating taking the lives of 168 people including 19 children. This coverage provided the most consistent reference to the *target of the action*, placing the most emphasis on the children killed or wounded in the Murrah Federal Building’s daycare facility. Half of the stories reporting on the victims either listed children among the targets in combination with civilians or federal employees (30 percent) or focused exclusively on the children (20 percent).

Label (Target)	O. City Bombing Stories
Civilians & Children	8% (7)
Children	20% (18)
Children & Federal Employees	2% (2)
Civilians & Federal Employees	1% (1)
Victims by Name	1% (1)
Unspecified	68% (62)

While the subsequent trial stories gave equal billing to children and civilians as the primary targets of the attack (11 percent each) when the trial coverage began, less emphasis was given to either as McVeigh became the primary focus of the reporting. In total, 75 percent of the stories did not label or address the victims within the trial coverage.

Label (Target)	O. City Trial Stories
Civilians	11% (12)
Children	11% (12)
Federal Employees	3% (3)
Victims by Name	0
Unspecified	75% (86)

Sourcing the Labels

Throughout both events, the dominant sources providing the majority of the narratives were the on-site reporters. The hesitant nature of investigators and government officials to provide concrete labels for the action and actors almost seemed to encourage on-site reporters to perpetuate various theories. Anchors, frequently mirroring cues taken from the on-site reporters, were the second most dominant source defining the events and those potentially responsible.

The World Trade Center bombing coverage was dominated by the definitions provided by the news media across 85 percent of the stories compared to just 13 percent by government officials and investigators.

Source	WTC Bombing Stories
Anchor	23% (14)
Reporter	62% (38)
Consultant	2% (1)
FBI	11% (7)
NYC Police Chief	2% (1)

Similar results were found in the Oklahoma City bombing coverage. Once again, the news media provided the majority of the narrative across 95 percent of the stories. An additional 4 percent were provided by eyewitness accounts from the scene during the first 48 hours of coverage.

Source	O.City Bombing Stories
Anchor	34% (36)
Reporter	61% (65)
Consultant	1% (1)
Other	4% (4)

The trial coverage was exclusively framed by the news media's on-site trial reporters. While consultants and officials may have provided commentary on the trial processes and potential outcomes, the *action* and *actor* labels remained in the hands of the reporters.

Source	WTC Trial Stories	O. City Trial Stories
Anchor	36% (4)	18% (20)
Reporter	64% (7)	82% (94)
(Legal) Consultant	0	0
Other	0	0

These figures mirror Livingston's earlier findings in which the descriptive labels for actor and action were created by reporters in 84 percent of the stories analyzed, a statistic indicating that during breaking news stories about violence "reporters tend to rely on their own descriptions of events" (Livingston, 1994, p. 72).

These findings do not conform to Bennett's (1990) indexing model and Entman's (2003) cascading activation model where the press is manipulated by elite frames. The 1993 and 1995 bombings were not instantly defined by the Clinton administration and other government elites as terrorist attacks, let alone critical national security concerns, although they could have easily taken advantage of both events were they politically motivated to do so. The findings do not negate the indexing and cascading activation models, but instead highlight a transition of dominance when the ambiguity of events can provide the media with more power to frame crises.

Competing Coverage

Despite the fact that both of these events and their trials became integral moments woven into America's history, there were multiple stories and events which took precedence throughout the coverage spans, including additional instances of terrorism.

The duration of the crisis in former Yugoslavia was long enough to disrupt the coverage of both events while the Waco standoff, and the Rodney King and Jack Kevorkian "Suicide Doctor" trials routinely interrupted coverage of the World Trade Center bombing. The O.J. Simpson media spectacle, the Unabomber, and Russia's war with Chechnya provided the most coverage interruptions of the Oklahoma City bombing.

The trial coverage for both bombings was also interrupted by significant stories including such iconic events as the downing of the U.S. military helicopter in Somalia, the Aldrich Ames spy case, the Whitewater scandal, and the JonBenet Ramsey case. Considering the scale of stories, it is easy to see why the World Trade Center trial appeared all but absent across the three networks.

In an ironic twist, the World Trade Center bombing trial coverage was interrupted almost completely by the coverage of the Oklahoma City bombing, an event that would replace the 1993 bombing as the worst terror attack in American history. A full breakdown of the stories interrupting the coverage of each event can be found in the appendix.

Public Opinion: Abstract & Personal Threats

Public opinion is a frequent Litmus test for gauging the potential power of frames as terrorist attacks "often precipitate turning points in public perceptions and attitudes" (Kuzma, 2000 p. 90). They can manifest themselves in the minds of the public as a threat

to personal safety or as an abstract national threat (Boomgaarden & de Vreese, 2007).

Terrorism as an *abstract threat* refers to the issue's perceived salience as a national political agenda item by the public while terrorism as a *personal threat* indicates personal feelings of danger at home or near the workplace (Lewis, 2000).

Threats that pose a physical danger “are likely to be very affectively arousing and to elicit fear to a greater degree than more remote threats to the nation” (Huddy, Feldman, Capelos, & Provost, 2002, p. 486). Heightened fear appeals should translate into a greater sense of personal threat as individual perceptions of becoming the victim of a terrorist attack increase. Prior to 9/11 however, analyses conducted by Kuzma (2000) and Lewis (2000) found little evidence suggesting Americans personalized threats of terrorism or considered it an abstract national threat. In fact, multiple national polls conducted between 1995 and 2001 found that “terrorism was mentioned by 1 percent or fewer of the respondents as one of the most important problems facing the country” (Huddy et al, 2002, p. 491).

These findings are consistent with the national survey results conducted in the wake of the 1993 and 1995 bombings. Following the World Trade Center bombing, an average of 78 percent of national survey respondents did not personally worry about terrorism where they lived.

Sense of Personal Threat following World Trade Center Bombing

Survey	Worried	Not Worried	Not Sure	N
Los Angeles Times (2/93)	23%	76%	1%	1273
Market Strategies & Greenberg (3/93)	28%	71%	1%	1020
Zogby (3/93)	12%	87%	1%	905

Source: Los Angeles Times; Market Strategies & Greenberg; Zogby

Less than a month after the bombing, only 33 percent of those surveyed by *Gallup* indicated that terrorism in the abstract was one of the most important issues facing America (Lewis, 2000).

Similarly low personal threat results were found across multiple national surveys following the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. On average, a 75 percent majority indicated that they did not personally worry about terrorism where they lived.

Sense of Personal Threat following Oklahoma City Bombing

Survey	Worried	Not Worried	Not Sure	N
Associated Press (4/95)	36%	63%	1%	1009
Gallup (4/95)	16%	84%	0%	1008
CBS / New York Times (7/95)	20%	79%	1%	1209

Source: Associated Press; Gallup; CBS / New York Times

Within two days of the bombing, *Gallup* found that 14 percent of those surveyed were very worried about terrorism and 28 percent were somewhat worried (42 percent) while 33 percent were not too worried and 24 percent were not worried at all (57 percent) (Carrol, 2005).

Following an extensive analysis of public opinion data, Lewis concluded that the Oklahoma City bombing “did not provoke personal apprehension and therefore, failed as an act of terrorism, despite the incalculable human anguish it inflicted” (Lewis, 2000 p. 207). If an act of terrorism was considered likely to happen in the future, the American public assumed it would happen to someone else (Lewis, 2000).

Kern, Just, and Norris (2003) found that television news coverage of terrorism in the 1990s mirrored the real-world decline of terrorist events with the average number of stories dropping from four per week in the 1980s to just two per week in the 1990s. They

also found a strong relationship between the coverage and public opinion as “levels of public concern roughly reflected patterns of coverage of terrorism shown on national TV network evening news” (Kern, Just & Norris, 2003, p. 290).

The attacks on 9/11 however, raised personal threat perception levels much more than the bombings in 1993 and 1995. In an immediate reaction poll conducted by *Gallup* on the same night of the attacks, 58 percent indicated they were worried that they would become victims of terrorism compared to just 24 percent polled in April of 2000 (Saad, 2004). Within the first few weeks of the attack, an average of 60 percent of those surveyed by *Gallup*, *The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press*, and *NBC / Wall Street Journal* were very worried about terrorism.

Sense of Personal Threat following 9/11

Survey	Worried	Not Worried	Not Sure	N
Gallup (10/01)	59%	41%	0%	1018
NBC / Wall Street Journal (9/01)*	66%	27%	7%	618
Pew (9/01)	54%	45%	1%	1000

Source: Gallup: The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press; Polling Report

A *Los Angeles Times* poll conducted two days after the attacks found that 87 percent of 1,561 respondents also considered terrorism in the abstract a serious problem in the United States (Polling Report).

Entman (2003), and Kern, Just & Norris (2003) found that George W. Bush's immediate terrorist threat frame for the attacks of 9/11 dominated news coverage leading the public to misperceive “the statistical risk of terrorist attacks” (Kern, Just & Norris, 2003, p. 282). This was not the case in 1993 and 1995 however, when government elites created a state of ambiguity by failing to identify the problems and their actors providing

"opportunities for players outside the administration, including the media themselves, to affect framing" (Entman, 2003, p. 50).

The media's reluctance to use terrorism labels when they did have the lead opportunity clearly affected the framing in 1993 and 1995 by downplaying rather than escalating the crises. While media effects are difficult to isolate and verify, I find a clear correlation between the lack of evening newscasts referring to the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings as terrorist attacks and subsequent national public opinion polls with low personal and abstract threat results.

Chapter 5: Limitations of this Study

I would first like to point out that this study does have a number of limitations which must be taken into consideration before discussing the findings of this thesis. The focus on evening newscasts may have excluded breaking news updates (although they were included for the first 24 hours of coverage for each bombing) and morning news programs, potentially omitting relevant stories for analysis. Evening broadcasts also tend to present a truncated interpretation of the day's news and may not be indicative of the actual events. Excluding *FOX* and 24-hour cable news outlets such as *CNN* may also skew the findings. Relying on television transcripts alone also excludes the potential for analyzing visual images and cues. However, the results of studies conducted by Cho et al (2003) found that television news transcripts contained stronger emotional cues than newspaper stories suggesting that "the visual and audio channels of television news operate in tandem" (Cho et al, 2003, p. 318). Therefore, my reliance on transcripts should have minimal impact on label and frame text analyses.

Print and radio coverage also was excluded, and while a broadcast television bias may exist, analyzing concurrent coverage across three different networks should provide sufficient diversity. Transcript samples were also limited by the two databases utilized and may not constitute a true representation of every broadcast. A larger sample of broadcast transcripts, including those excluded from the initial data collection, may have altered the final results. Therefore, I cannot claim that my analysis represents a complete picture of all the domestic news coverage for each event.

While I feel my selected time frames were reasonably inclusive to quantify my framing analyses, the samples did not include stories that may have appeared after the first month of coverage for each event or in between the two-week time periods established for each stage of the trials (although larger search parameters were also run for the latter to capture additional stories which may have been missed initially). 441 transcripts, however, should prove more than adequate for this particular analysis.

Serving as the only coder for this project, reliability testing for the protocol was not possible. However, I feel confident in my findings, as the basis of the coding scheme required a minimum of subjective decisions relying on the straightforward counting of words and stories.

The statistics regarding terrorist attacks in the United States are exceedingly rare and some critics may argue that such sensational events lead to atypical coverage creating an inaccurate representation of media practices. I feel that this makes the events selected for analysis extremely desirable because they are unlikely to be repeated and easier to isolate.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Despite two rather sizable attacks on U.S. soil between 1993 and 1995, patterns in the evening network news coverage samples for both events seems to support a tendency by the American media to externalize threats combined with an obvious reluctance to use the emotionally charged terms terrorism and terrorist, supporting Livingston's (1994) earlier print findings. When terrorism was speculated in the coverage, the actors were presumed to be foreign and predominantly stereotyped as Middle Eastern Muslims. If domestic terrorism was a concern, it was not reflected within the stories sampled.

Differences between labeling American and international bombers were most noticeable during the trial coverage. The World Trade Center bombers became textbook examples of the stereotypical and clichéd American image of foreign, radicalized Muslims with Middle Eastern passports, especially during the trial coverage. The Pavlovian response by the media to readily invoke this staid stereotype was clearly evident during the first 24 hours of Oklahoma City coverage when Middle Eastern terrorists were reported immediately as the most likely actors with direct comparisons drawn to the Beirut and World Trade Center bombings. When McVeigh and Nichols were arrested as the primary suspects, the culturally conditioned media was left apologetically back peddling.

McVeigh and his domestic accomplices confounded government officials, the news media, and the public, forcing everyone to re-evaluate who they perceived as terrorists and what actions would or would not be, labeled as acts of terrorism. Definitive terrorism labels were piecemeal and inconsistent following the Oklahoma City bombing

once domestic Caucasian suspects were revealed as the true culprits within days of the explosion. While the bombing was later immortalized as the deadliest terrorist attack in U.S. history, McVeigh himself was labeled a bomber, not a terrorist.

When it came to defining attacks committed on American soil, “bombing” became the dominant label of choice (even when the suspects were periodically labeled as terrorists). Stories within my search parameters that did report incidents of terrorism focused primarily on attacks overseas including the Hebron Mosque massacre, bombings in Bombay, the Sarin gas subway attacks in Japan, and other events in the Middle East. Once again, the threat of terrorism was an externalized one. Bombings might have happened in the United States, but terrorism happened elsewhere.

Unlike the attacks in 2001, the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings also did not appear to receive the level of 24-hour coverage associated with 9/11. Coverage for both stories was abbreviated or eliminated by a wide variety of other stories including several sensational scandals, celebrity trials, and the ongoing crisis in Bosnia. While Oklahoma City was a tragic event, it did not transform the nation to the extreme post-9/11 levels still prevalent seven years after the attacks.

Livingston states that “crisis is as much a product of the language used to depict a situation as it is the product of any discernable features of the situation” (Livingston, 1994, p. 138). Following 9/11, President Bush strategically defined his crisis as a war on terrorism rationalizing his policy remedies before a highly anxious public. The administration immediately extinguished challenges as “it was vital to convey an unambiguous and emotionally compelling frame to the public” (Entman, 2003, p. 416).

This was clearly not the case during the Clinton administration in 1993 and 1995, when political elites failed to immediately define each crisis, providing the media with more framing power when dealing with ambiguous events. Combined with a general reluctance by the media to use terrorism labels in their reporting during the mid 1990s, it is understandable that personal and abstract fears of terrorism remained low priorities with the American public.

Dependent upon the media, the public not only learns what a problem is, but who caused the problem through frames. The labels used to define the problems and their actors have the power to either pacify or heighten fear appeals during times of crisis. Quick thinking politicians can manipulate an event by defining problems that suit their otherwise controversial policy remedies. Failing to take action provides the media with more power to employ the narrative. Similar problems with drastically dissimilar outcomes based on the strategic usage of a few key words. Therein lies the true power of framing.

APPENDIX

Competing Coverage

World Trade Center Bombing	Oklahoma City Bombing
Hebron Mosque Massacre	O.J. Simpson Trial
Rodney King Trial	The Unabomber
Waco Standoff	Russia / Chechnya War
Bombings in Bombay, India	President Clinton declares Iran is trying to build a nuclear bomb
Jack Kevorkian "Suicide Doctor" Case	Raid on Japan's religious cult <i>Aum Shinrikyo</i> (Sarin Gas attacks)
Glen Ridge, New Jersey High School Rape Trial	President Clinton's ban on Assault Weapons
Swearing in of Attorney General Janet Reno	President Clinton versus NRA
Crisis in Bosnia	Fighting in Croatia
World Trade Center Trial	Oklahoma City Trial
Oklahoma City Bombing	Floods in the Midwest
Downing of U.S. Helicopter in Somalia	Peru / Lima Hostage Rescue
Israel-PLO peace agreement	Missing A-10 Thunderbolt in Colorado
Aldrich Ames / CIA Spy Case	Standoff between law enforcement and anti-government secessionist group the <i>Republic of Texas</i>
Clinton / Whitewater Scandal	JonBenet Ramsey Murder Case
North American Free Trade Agreement	Auto strikes against General Motors and Chrysler
Moslem offensive in Bosnia	Earthquake in Iran
Hebron Mosque Massacre	Air Force pilot Lieutenant Kelly Flinn Adultery Case
Murder of Foreign Tourist Gary Colley in Florida	Visit by Pope John Paul II to Beirut, Lebanon

Raw Findings:

World Trade Center Bombing

Lead Story:

- Yes (27)
- No (34)
- No Story (26)

Action:

- Explosion (15)
- Bomb (7)
- Bombing (24)
- Car Bomb (1)
- Bomb Blast (2)
- Blast (1)
- Terrorist Bombing (11)

Who*:

- Bombers (2)
- Terrorist Bombers (1)
- Terrorist Group (1)
- Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman (suspected link) (1)
- Mohammed Salameh (13)
- Bombing Suspect Mohammed Salameh (1)
- Mohammed Salameh & Associates (1)
- Mohammed Salameh and Nidal Ayyad (3)
- Mohammed Salameh and Ibrahim Elgabrowny (2)
- Mohammed Salameh, Nidal Ayyad and Ibrahim Elgabrowny (3)
- Mahmud Abouhalima, Mohammed Salameh, Omar Abdel Rahman (3)
- Mohammed Salameh, Nidal Ayyad, Mahmud Abouhalima (1)
- Bilal Alkaisi, Mohammed Salameh, Ibrahim Elgabrowny and Nidal Ayyad (1)
- Bilal Alkaisi, Mahmud Abouhalima, Mohammed Salameh, Ibrahim Elgabrowny and Nidal Ayyad (1)

* Islamic Fundamentalist / Radial used before the names.

Target:

- Civilians (2)
- Civilians / School Children (1)
- Innocent Victims (3)
- Workers (1)
- Missing Man (1)
- Body (1)

- Wilfredo Mercado (2)

Source:

- Anchor (14)
- Reporter (38)
- FBI (7)
- NYC Police Chief (1)
- Consultant (1)

Terrorism:

- Yes (7)
- No (3)
- May Have Been (19)
- No Mention (32)

Foreign or Domestic:

- Foreign (Possibly) (16)
- Domestic (0)
- No Distinction (45)
-

World Trade Center Bombing Trial*

Lead Story:

- Yes (4)
- No (7)
- No Story (83)

Action:

- Bombing (10)
- Deadly Bombing (1)
- Terrorist Plot (1)

Who:

- Moslems (2)
- Moslem fundamentalists (2)
- Terrorists (1)
- Fugative Terrorists (1)
- Islamic Terrorists (1)
- Four Men (1)
- Radical Muslim Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman (1)

Target:

- NA

Source:

- Anchor (4)

- Reporter (7)

Terrorism:

- Yes (11)
- No (0)

Foreign or Domestic:

*When number of stories was low, ran Lexis-Nexis search from March 1, 1994 to May 28, 1994, still with low story totals.

Oklahoma City Bombing

Lead Story:

- Yes (72)
- No (34)
- No Story Mentions (7)

Action:

- Bombing (69)
- Bombing Attack (1)
- Bombing Case (1)
- Bombing Plot (1)
- Terrorist Bombing (31)
- Terrorist Attack (2)
- Car Bomb (1)
- No Story Mentions (7)

Who:

- Timothy McVeigh (24)
- Prime Suspect Timothy McVeigh (1)
- Timothy McVeigh – John Doe 1 (1)
- Alleged Bomber Timothy McVeigh (21)
- Timothy McVeigh & John Doe #2 (7)
- Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols (witness) (1)
- Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols (10)
- Timothy McVeigh and Steven Colbern (4)
- Terry Nichols (1)
- Steven Colbern (1)
- Three Middle Eastern Men (1)
- Two Middle Eastern Men (1)
- Possibly Terrorists (1)
- Two White Males (1)
- Two Suspects (1)
- Terrorists (1)

- Home Grown Terrorists (1)
- Right-Wing Militia (2)
- Unknown Suspects (11)
- Unspecified (15)
- No Story Mentions (7)

Target:

- Civilians (15)
- Civilians / Children (7)
- Innocent Children (4)
- Children (14)
- Children / Federal Employees (2)
- Civilians / Federal Employees (1)
- Survivor Pamela Briggs (1)
- Unspecified (62)
- No Story Mentions (7)

Source:

- Anchor (36)
- Reporter (65)
- Reporter / Consultant (1)
- Other (4)
- No Story Mentions (7)

Terrorism:

- Yes (28)
- No (76)
- May Have Been (2)
- No Story Mentions (7)

Foreign or Domestic:

- Foreign (Possibly) (4)
- Domestic (5)
- Unspecified (95)
- No Story Mentions (7)

Oklahoma City Bombing Trial

Lead Story:

- Yes (56)
- No (58)
- No Story Mentions (33)

Action:

- Bombing (83)
- Terror Attack (8)
- Terrorist Act (Act of Terror, Act of Terrorism) (5)
- Terrorism (18)
- No Story Mentions (33)

Who:

- Bombing Suspect Timothy McVeigh (87)
- Bomber Timothy McVeigh (21)
- Convicted Bomber Timothy McVeigh (1)
- Bombing Perpetrator Timothy McVeigh (1)
- Accused Bomber Timothy McVeigh (1)
- Timothy McVeigh (3)
- No Story Mentions (33)

Target:

- Children (12)
- People (Innocent) (12)
- Federal Employees (Authorities) (3)
- Government Agents (1)
- Unspecified (86)
- No Story Mentions (33)

Source:

- Anchor (20)
- Reporter (94)
- No Story Mentions (33)

Terrorism:

- Yes (23)
- No – (Not Classified As) (91)
- No Story Mentions (33)

Foreign or Domestic:

- Foreign (Possibly) (1)
- Domestic (4)
- Unspecified (109)
- No Story Mentions (33)

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